



Wildlife Division
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
October 17, 2019

Dear Interested Person:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is requesting public review and comment on the following items. Supporting information on these items can be found on our website under "Opportunity for Public Comment" at fwp.mt.gov/hunting/ or directly by using the links below.

Proposed Montana Bovine Tuberculosis Surveillance Plan

Bovine tuberculosis (bTB) is a bacterial disease caused by *Mycobacterium bovis* (*M. bovis*). Bovine TB is primarily a disease of cattle but can affect many other species of mammals. The disease can spill over from livestock to wildlife, which can then serve as a reservoir, potentially transmitting the disease to other uninfected wildlife, cattle, and, in some cases, humans. States with bTB cases in cattle and/or wildlife experience significant negative economic impacts on the livestock industry and are subject to increased regulation and requirements for interstate movement of livestock.

Mycobacterium bovis infection typically causes chronic, progressive disease in cervids. There are no documented cases of bTB causing cervid population declines. The impacts of aggressive management in endemic areas often have a much greater impact on deer survival than mortality resulting from this chronic disease. The primary motives for surveillance and early detection of bTB in wildlife include the potential for wildlife species to serve as a reservoir for transmission to cattle, the major economic consequences to the cattle industry that would come with loss of bTB-free status, the potential for human health impacts, decreased tolerance for infected wild cervid populations on the landscape, and the major expense and aggressive nature of managing the disease once established in wild populations.

If bTB were to become endemic in wildlife populations, the cost of management would drastically increase and the likelihood of eradicating the disease would decrease. The goals of FWP's current bTB Surveillance Plan include preventing spillover of the disease to wildlife, early detection to prevent the disease from becoming endemic in wildlife, and preparing to respond if needed.

City of White Sulphur Springs Urban Mule Deer Management Plan

MCA 7-31-4110 recognizes that cities or towns may need to manage wildlife within their boundaries to protect residents or their property. Recent FWP surveys of mule deer within the city of White Sulphur Springs found a minimum winter density of >120 deer/mi². The Meagher County Sheriff's Office, FWP, and city staff regularly respond to incidents of deer acting aggressively or damaging residents' homes and landscaping.

The White Sulphur Springs City Council developed a Mule Deer Management Action Plan, which is intended to 1) reduce the negative impacts to people caused by mule deer within the city of White Sulphur Springs and, 2) provide the City of White Sulphur Springs and the Meagher County Sheriff with the management tools necessary to effectively respond to individual deer-human conflicts and to limit overall mule deer density within the city limits, as necessary.

The City requests that FWP issue the Meagher County Sheriff (the City's law enforcement) a Permit to Destroy Game Animals Causing Damage. The permit would allow the sheriff, or his agents, to 1) euthanize individual deer within city limits that threaten human safety or property and, 2) reduce the potential for human-deer conflicts by lowering the density of resident deer within the city of White Sulphur Springs.

All deer removed under the permit would be professionally processed (at the City's expense) for distribution to residents in need. The City would prepare an annual report for FWP describing how the plan was implemented.

TO MAKE A COMMENT

For further clarification or additional materials, you may call the Wildlife Division office at 406-444-2612 or email at fwpwld@mt.gov. Comments will be accepted: online by using any of the links below, in writing sent to the address above, and by email to fwpwld@mt.gov.

COMMENT PERIOD DEADLINE & FINAL ADOPTION MEETING

All proposed items will be accepting public comments until **Monday, November 18, 2019, at 5 p.m.**, with final adoption at either the **December 2019 or February 2020** Commission Meeting.

✓ **Montana's Bovine Tuberculosis Surveillance Plan**

<http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/publicComments/2019/bovineTBPlan.html>

✓ **City of White Sulphur Springs Urban Mule Deer Management Plan**

<http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/publicComments/2019/wssUrbanDeerMgmt.html>